Understanding Policy Audiences
Identifying Research Findings to Share with Policymakers
What is a Research Policy Brief?
Structure of a Research Policy Brief
Case Study - Getting Started
Tips to Keep in Mind
UNDERSTANDING POLICY AUDIENCES

- Elected or appointed officials (local, state, federal), agency leaders and/or staff
- Membership (e.g., NCSL, NGA) and advocacy (ZERO TO THREE) organizations
- Responsible for understanding many issues, often considered generalists; some have more specialized expertise
- Usually working within tight timelines; yet, able to digest much information in short amount of time
- Understand there are opposite sides to most issues
- They want to know what the research says and hear YOUR views
What did the research find? What’s the key thing to share?

How are the findings relevant to policymakers?

What’s the best time to share these findings?

Which policymakers would/should be most interested in these findings?

What’s the best way to share the research?
WHAT IS A RESEARCH POLICY BRIEF?

- Concise summary of a particular study topic
- Aims to convey research findings or insight in a policy context
- Generally offer 'key considerations' or recommendations for policy makers

Length

- Short – 1 page; May also be visual (such as infographic)
- Long – Up to 8 pages (3,000 words)

Types of policy briefs: Advocacy or Objective; analysis or recommendation
A research policy brief should:

- **Educate**: Present information relevant to reader – insight into topic of interest, uncover a new problem or present new information about existing problem/challenge to understand the problem.

- **Identify**: Uncover a problem, identify gap/challenge, describe an important trend, key finding.

- **Analyze**: Provide unique, research-based perspective on the problem and objectively identify possible steps for addressing problem. about alternatives (in an objective brief). Provide evidence to support one alternative (in an advocacy brief).

- **Motivate**: Encourage the reader to ask more questions; further investigate problem; pursue solutions.
Four essentials in a research policy brief:

1. Catchy, clear title
2. Abstract
3. Body
4. Takeaways
DOING IT WELL: POLICYLAB AT CHOP

1. Catchy, clear title

2. Abstract

3. Body

4. Takeaways
1. CATCHY, CLEAR TITLE

Use the colon method – Write a catchy main title followed by a subtitle with information about the content of the research policy brief.

A Stitch in Time: Calculating the Cost of School Unreadiness

When the Bough Breaks: The Effects of Homelessness on Young Children

Use these criteria to check your title:

- Predicts content
- Interesting
- Includes key words
2. ABSTRACT

What’s the problem/challenge and who does it affect?

What research was done and implications?

What are options for addressing the problem/challenge?

100 words with the aim, problem, summary of research, and implications

Write it last.
3. INSIDE THE BODY

Aim → Problem → Findings → Implications/Policy Options

Discussion → References → Author Info/bio
First Paragraph

- **Aim**: The purpose of the brief; 1-2 sentences; included in the first paragraph.
- **Problem**: Describe context, causes and magnitude of the problem, and why it should be important to the reader.
3. BODY - RESEARCH FINDINGS

Findings

- Present research without partisan views.
- Communicate in easy-to-understand language
- Include information about generalizability by describing study population
- Outline policy options and evidence

NOTE: Not necessary to include technical research methodology and statistical analysis. Point to your longer research report.
3. BODY – CONCLUDING SECTIONS

- Implications and Policy Options

- Conclusion/Discussion – One paragraph to summarize take away findings/recommendations.
  - Don’t let your only finding be that the field needs more research studies.

- References

- Author Info/Bio
3. BODY – RESEARCH FINDINGS TIPS

TIPS

- Use plenty of headers/subheaders
- Use bullets
- Use graphs with care
- Include counter positions or arguments against your recommendation in your analysis.
4. KEY TAKEAWAYS

Provide possible quotes, statistics, highlights, main takeaways that should be emphasized in sidebar.

Note if research found something new.

Why this section is important

- Translation
- Helps with communicating with policymakers (also reporters)
- Helps readers understand what the research says and why it matters
- Builds your brand, establishes your organization and you as trusted resource
- More researchers should do this to ensure integrity of research is communicated accurately and consistently to policymakers
Examining Child-Teacher Relationships and Classroom Quality Across Racial Groups
Quality, Relationships and Race Affect Early Learning Outcomes
Relationships Matter: Conflicts, Quality and Race Effects on Early Learning Outcomes
TAKE AWAY EXAMPLES
Income Effects on Food Insecurity

Household income can significantly affect children's diets.

Children in households with incomes below the poverty line are six times more likely to have low food security than their counterparts in households with incomes at 185 percent of poverty or higher; and they are fourteen times more likely to experience very low food security.

Though households with higher incomes spend more money on food than lower income households, this represents a smaller proportion of their income. In food-insecure households, families tend to spend less on food than do families in food-secure households suggesting that when resources are tight, families may buy less food and/or less expensive foods.

Children who are Hispanic, black, or living with a single parent are also much more likely to be food-insecure than are children who are white or living in married-couple families.
TAKE AWAY EXAMPLES

REPEAT HOSPITAL VISITS FOR HIGH-RISK CHILDREN WITH ASThma

Reduction in Repeat Hospital Visits for Children with Asthma

Childhood asthma hospitalizations, although preventable, are major drivers of health costs and can negatively impact parental employment and a child’s school success.

Social risk factors for childhood asthma are more prevalent among poor urban and minority families, putting these already vulnerable children at greater risk for asthma hospitalizations.

Addressing these risk factors requires collaboration among everyone involved in a child’s asthma management.

By considering a patient’s needs both inside the hospital and in the community, healthcare providers, systems and payers can help reduce asthma hospitalizations.
KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Childhood asthma hospitalizations, although preventable, are major drivers of health costs and can negatively impact parental employment and a child’s school success.

- Social risk factors for childhood asthma are more prevalent among poor, urban and minority families, putting these already vulnerable children at greater risk for asthma hospitalizations.

Addressing these risk factors requires collaboration among everyone involved in a child’s asthma management.

By considering a patient’s needs both inside the hospital and in the community, health care providers, systems and payers can help reduce asthma hospitalizations.
WRITING THE ABSTRACT – DO THIS LAST

100 words

**PROBLEM:**
WHAT’S THE PROBLEM/CHALLENGE AND WHO DOES IT AFFECT?

**AIM (OF RESEARCH):**
WHAT RESEARCH WAS DONE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN, OTHERS?

**OPTIONS:**
WHAT ARE POLICY OPTIONS, GIVEN THE RESEARCH?
Excess consumption of added sugars, especially from sugary drinks, poses a grave health threat to children and adolescents, disproportionately affecting children of minority and low-income communities. Public policies, such as those detailed in this statement, are needed to decrease child and adolescent consumption of added sugars and improve health.
This brief provides California policymakers with recommendations on how to improve access to high-quality early childhood education (ECE) for all children. It is based on a report that examines the ECE practices in 10 counties that vary by region, population density, and child care affordability. The report upon which this brief is based describes the landscape of ECE at the local level as it is shaped by federal and state policies, illuminates challenges that counties face in providing access to high-quality programs, and highlights promising practices. This report complements our earlier publication, Understanding California’s Early Care and Education System.

Why are these findings important? Think of your policy audience.

How do they relate to policy and practice?

What did the research find? What’s the key thing to share?

How does it tie into program or practice?

How does it relate to policies?

Which policymakers would/should be most interested in these findings?

What’s the best time to share these findings?

What’s the best way to share the research?
Early Teacher-Child Relationships of Multilingual Children

Anna Rhoad-Drogalis, Robin Sayers, Laura Justice, Tzu-Jung Lin, Jessica Logan, Kelly Purtell
Discussion

- There are **not statistically significant differences in conflict** based on children's language background
- Teachers perceived less closeness with multilingual students compared to monolingual students across the school year
- Once children's language skills were accounted for, **differences in teacher-child closeness by language background were no longer significant**
- Teachers' struggles to form and maintain close relationships with their multilingual students **may be largely attributed to children's limited use of English skills**
What questions might a policy maker, especially a legislative one, ask: (check all that apply)

- What’s the age group of children?
- What type of teacher?
- How important is the relationship?
- What about non multi-lingual children?
- Does the study apply to children in my state?
Summer Skill Development Between PreK and Kindergarten

Mirjana Pralica
Meghan McCormick
Paola Rosada
Christina Weiland
JoAnn Hsueh
Jason Sachs
Catherine Snow

March 23rd, 2019
Society for Research on Child Development Biennial Meeting
Baltimore, MD
Conclusions

• Students continue to grow in academic skills during the summer between PreK and K

• Growth in skills during the summer is slower than during the PreK or K academic years

• Variation in summer growth rates by students’ SES, race/ethnicity, and DLL status (depending on outcome)

• Enrollment in center-based care during the summer appears to help sustain PreK growth rates but mostly for higher-SES students.
What questions might a policy maker have about the conclusions? (select all that apply)

- What’s normal? What’s optimal? Is it okay for growth of skills to be slower in the summer?
- What does this mean for child care policy?
- What does this mean for Pre-K policy?
- What are the characteristics of the center-based care where Pre-K growth rates were sustained?
Examining Child-Teacher Relationships and Classroom Quality Across Racial Groups

Iheoma U. Iruka
HighScope Educational Research Foundation

Susan Sheridan, Lisa Knoche, and Amanda Witte
University of Nebraska – Lincoln

2019 Biennial SRCD Conference Baltimore, MD
March 22, 2019

The research reported here was supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305N160016 to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education.
Rationale for Study

• Teacher-student relationships and interactions are critical factors in children’s learning experiences and achievement (Crosnoe et al., 2010)

• Persistent social challenge of the racial achievement gap that start early

• Some indication that children of color likely to experience less enriched learning opportunities (Early, Iruka, et al. 2010; Gilliam et al., 2016)

• The extent of these racial differences in opportunities to learn on children’s achievement have been underexplored in pre-K
Take Home Points

- Conflict with teacher more negatively associated with Latinx children’s problem behaviors than peers
- Black children less likely have close relationships with teachers and be in emotionally supportive classrooms compared to peers
- Universal and cultural relevance of specific teacher-child relationships and classroom quality on children’s learning and behavior needs more attention.
- Deeper examination about bias and equity in early childhood experiences and opportunities to learn, especially for minoritized children
Questions to anticipate from policymakers:

- What public programs are serving these children now? (What are the ages of children for whom this applies?)
- What are current qualifications for teachers in these settings?
- Do model teacher training programs exist? What are the key characteristics?
- What should we (policymakers) do to support further research?
DISCUSSION: RELATING RESEARCH TO PROGRAMS OR PRACTICE

- Why are these findings important? Think of your policy audience.
- How do they relate to policy and practice?
- What did the research find? What’s the key thing to share?
- How does it tie into program or practice?
- How does it relate to policies?
- Which policymakers would/should be most interested in these findings?
- What’s the best time to share these findings?
- What’s the best way to share the research?
FINAL THOUGHTS ON INCLUDING DATA IN RESEARCH POLICY BRIEFS

- Depends on audience
- Data/methods
- Depends on key take-aways
- Infographics
TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND

- Be clear, concise, and succinct.
- Use small, easy to understand words.
- Say more with fewer words, policymakers may skim
- Non-academic
- Active voice
- Write abstract after you write the brief
- Write about timely topics that policymakers care about
- Be respectful of “values” held by different sides. Be sensitive to how you present your arguments.
THANKS!

Marci McCoy-Roth, Partner
marci@truenorthgroup.com

Hope Cooper, Founding Partner
hope@truenorthgroup.com
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- How to write a policy brief: [https://www.pep-net.org/sites/pep-net.org/files/typo3doc/pdf/CBMS_country_proj_profiles/Philippines/CBMS_forms/Guidelines_for_Writing_a_Policy_Brief.pdf](https://www.pep-net.org/sites/pep-net.org/files/typo3doc/pdf/CBMS_country_proj_profiles/Philippines/CBMS_forms/Guidelines_for_Writing_a_Policy_Brief.pdf)

- How to cite everything in APA style: [https://www.easybib.com/guides/citation-guides/apa-format/](https://www.easybib.com/guides/citation-guides/apa-format/)

- How to turn a graph into a story: [http://speakingppt.com/3-steps-to-turn-a-graph-into-a-story/](http://speakingppt.com/3-steps-to-turn-a-graph-into-a-story/)

- How to communicate research for policy influence: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08a15ed915d622c00055b/Guia-02-serie-3-ingles.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08a15ed915d622c00055b/Guia-02-serie-3-ingles.pdf)